

a plurality of processing servers each being coupled to communicate with every one of the plurality of outbound resources and the database server over an internal packet-switched data network, each processing server implements a router-filter and a message queue,

the message queue to store request messages that are one of (1) addressed to, and (2) received from, a customer of the message delivery service, over an external packet-switched data network,

the router-filter to obtain a request message from the queue while polling the queue for pending requests, validate a customer associated with said request message after accessing the account information in the database server, and based on a message type of said request message determining which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, and

each of the plurality of outbound resources being capable of converting said request message, once assigned to it by the router-filter, into one of a format capable of being transmitted to a fax machine over a generalized switched telephone network (GSTN), a format capable of being played back to a telephone over the GSTN, and a format capable of being transmitted to a paging terminal over the GSTN or to a paging gateway over the external network packet-switched network, based upon the message type of said request message.

16. (New) The system of claim 15 wherein the internal data network is a private data network.

17. (New) The system of claim 15 wherein the router-filter is to prioritize a plurality request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

18. (New) The system of claim 15 wherein the router-filter is to determine which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said request message.

19. (New) The system of claim 15 wherein the router-filter is to generate an error message that indicates an error in delivering said request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said request message was assigned.

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20. (New) An article of manufacture for supporting a message delivery system, comprising:

a machine-readable medium containing instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause an internal packet-switched data network to be configured into a plurality of processing servers each being capable of initiating communication with every one of a plurality of outbound resources and a database server that are part of the internal packet-switched data network, each processing server implements a router-filter and a message queue, the message queue to store request messages that are one of (1) addressed to, and (2) received from, a customer of the message delivery service, over an external packet-switched data network, the router-filter to obtain a request message from the queue while polling the queue for pending requests, validate a customer associated with said request message after accessing the account information in the

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database server, and based on a message type of said request message determining which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, and each of the plurality of outbound resources being capable of converting said request message, once assigned to it by the router-filter, into one of a format capable of being transmitted to a fax machine over a generalized switched telephone network (GSTN), a format capable of being played back to a telephone over the GSTN, and a format capable of being transmitted to a paging terminal over the GSTN or to a paging gateway over the external network packet-switched network, based upon the message type of said request message.

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21. The article of manufacture of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, configure the internal network into a private data network.

22. (New) The article of manufacture of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, configure the router-filter to prioritize a plurality request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

23. (New) The article of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, configure the router-filter to determine which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said request message.

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24. (New) The article of claim 20 wherein the machine readable medium includes further instructions which, when executed by the processor, configure the router-filter to generate an error message that indicates an error in delivering said request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said request message was assigned.

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25. (New) A method for supporting a message delivery service, comprising:
communicating with a plurality of outbound resources and a data base server over an internal packet-switched data network, each of the plurality of outbound resources being capable of converting a request message into a format capable of being transmitted to one of (1) a fax machine over a generalized switched telephone network (GSTN), (2) a telephone over the GSTN, and (3) a paging terminal over the GSTN or a paging gateway over the external network packet-switched network, based upon a message type of said request message, the database server containing account information on customers of the message delivery service;

obtaining a request message from a message queue while polling the queue for pending requests, the queue storing a plurality of request messages that are addressed to or received from customers of the message delivery service and that were sent from the external packet-switched data network;

validating a customer associated with said obtained request message after accessing the account information in the database server; and

based on the message type of said obtained request message, determining to which of the plurality of outbound resources said obtained request message should be assigned.

26. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein the internal data network is a private data network.

27. (New) The method of claim 25 further comprising:
prioritizing the delivery of a plurality request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

28. (New) The method of claim 25 further comprising:
determining which of the plurality of outbound resources to assign said obtained request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said obtained request message.

29. (New) The method of claim 25 further comprising:
generating an error message that indicates an error in delivering said obtained request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said obtained request message was assigned.

REMARKS

This preliminary amendment is being filed concurrently with a continued prosecution application, within two months after a Notice of Appeal dated July 17,

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